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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Iran
- [1](#)2. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Leading media reported that Deputy Secretary of State James B. Steinberg will arrive in Israel today, leading an important delegation of officials from the Pentagon, the National Security

Council, and U.S. intelligence agencies. Media reported that the meetings will focus on bilateral strategic issues, mainly Iran. Deputy FM Daniel Ayalon is scheduled to head the Israeli side, with the head of the Defense Ministry's Diplomatic-Security Bureau Amos Gilad, the head of the National Security Council Uzi Arad, and Foreign Ministry Director-General Yossi Gal participating.

The Jerusalem Post led with DM Ehud Barak's visit to Washington. The Yediot-associated Web site Ynet reported that the talks will focus on the Iranian nuclear threat; however, another issue that will likely be raised is the indirect talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The Defense Minister is expected to lean mainly on the most recent report issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency that asserted that Iran is actively seeking nuclear warheads. According to Ynet, Barak will deliberate with Secretaries Clinton and Gates regarding the manner in which the international community should be goaded into imposing sanctions on Tehran. In addition, he will speak with Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, about cooperation between the U.S. and Israel as well as Iran's nuclear aspirations. Yediot (Shimon Shiffer) reported that PM Benjamin Netanyahu's bureau has initiated contacts for a meeting between President Obama and the PM, who will visit Washington soon for the AIPAC convention. Israel Hayom reported that the White House and even Europe are fed up with Iran. (Major media cited White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs warning that the United States' "time and patience is running out" over Iran's nuclear program. Gibbs was quoted as saying that Iran will face consequences if it continues uranium enrichment.)

Israel Hayom, Maariv, and other leading media reported that PA President Mahmoud Abbas responded with a strong speech at the European Parliament in Brussels yesterday to the Israeli Government's decision to include the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb on the outskirts of Bethlehem, saying that it amounted to a declaration of a war of religion. Hamas Prime Minister in Gaza Ismail Haniyeh called for starting a third Intifada. Hizbullah stated that the decision was yet another example of Israeli haughtiness. The Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem called the Arab responses a hypocritical and false campaign, as these are tombs of the forefathers of Jewish people dating back 3,500 years. Israel Hayom quoted Likud Knesset Member Ofir Akon, who is considered a close associate of Netanyahu, as saying: Israel preserves a heritage; the Palestinians' heritage is one of blood, fire, and pillars of smoke. Speaking on Israel Radio this morning, Jewish Home's New National Religious Party Knesset Member and former cabinet minister Zevulun Orlev cited the PA's ongoing denial of the Jewish past in the country, whereas United Arab List Knesset Member Talab El-Sana pointed at the gravity of the Government's move. Maariv reported that Hebron settlers wrote Netanyahu, requesting that two more sites -- the tombs of Othniel Ben-Knaz, a Biblical judge who ruled from 1228 to 1188 BCE, and Ruth the Moabite -- be included in the heritage list. In other news, Maariv reported that the Education Ministry has devised a program that has already been approved by the cabinet: all university and college students will soon be required to take a compulsory course in the heritage of the Jewish people and the Zionist project.

Haaretz reported that Mosab Hassan Yousef, the son of the Hamas founder in the West Bank, who now lives in California, was a top Shin Bet agent for over a decade. Saying that the Palestinian deserves the Israel Defense Prize, Israel Radio called the story a giant scoop.

Yediot cited assessments in Beijing that Bank of Israel Governor Stanley Fischer and Minister Moshe Yaalon will not be able to convince the Chinese Government to join sanctions on Iran.

Leading media quoted former IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz as saying yesterday at a Tel Aviv University conference dealing with Israeli deterrence that anyone like Mahmoud al-Mabhouh will from now on think twice before carrying out any action. Israel Hayom reported that al-Mabhouh's closest aide was arrested in Damascus on suspicion of involvement in his assassination. Maariv quoted the Irish daily, The Irish Times, as saying that Kevin Deveron (sp.), who the Dubai police chief says headed the assassination team, listed his address as the family home of former Irish PM Albert Reynolds. The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday Kadima chair and opposition leader Tzipi Livni called on the international community to support

Israel's effort to fight terrorism, alluding for the first time to the Dubai assassination. Speaking at the closing plenary of the Jewish Agency Board of Governors' meeting in Jerusalem, she said that any comparison between terrorism and those fighting it is immoral. Noting that U.S. forces in Afghanistan accidentally killed 27 civilians on Monday, Livni said it must be clear that the world supports armies that are fighting terrorists and not terrorists who target innocent civilians.

Yediot reported that data relating to Israel and Taiwan have been removed from an official presentation of the U.N.'s International Telecommunication Union. The newspaper cited the amazement of Israeli Foreign Ministry sources over the fact that their ministry is not responding to this move.

Yediot reported that Israel has asked Indonesia to facilitate the granting of visas to Israelis. The newspaper also reported that Israel will open an embassy in New Zealand and that a bilateral agreement to be signed next week will allow Israeli travelers to find employment in that country.

Beneath the headline, 'Who's Talking about Human Rights,' Yediot reported that Moazzam Begg, a British/Pakistani Muslim and an enthusiastic Taliban fan, who was held in extrajudicial detention in the Bagram Theater Internment Facility and the Guantanamo Bay detention camp is now Amnesty International's spokesman.

Israel Hayom reported that yesterday former Chief Justice Aharon Barak told foreign ambassadors assembled at the Knesset that democracy in Israel is not self-understood. Makor Rishon-Hatzofer quoted Justice Barak as saying that Israel is the only party to pay the price of a double moral standard and that the state's security does not constitute an unlimited license to harm human rights and that the balance between them is complex but necessary. Media quoted Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin (Likud) as saying that according to the Goldstone Report, Churchill was a war criminal too.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Israeli-founded technology firm GreenRoad announced on Monday that it had received \$10 million in investment funds from former U.S. Vice President Al Gore's Generation IM Climate Solutions Fund to accelerate the deployment of its GreenRoad 360 service. GreenRoad's product provides drivers and fleet managers with smart analysis of driving behavior and coaches them on how to improve fuel efficiency. In an interview with The Jerusalem Post, founder and safety chief Hod Fleishman spoke about the company's product and his pride in the association with Gore's fund.

Leading media reported that a 70-storey skyscraper will soon be built in the west of the Tel Aviv suburb of Givatayim and become Israel's tallest structure. The surface of its offices, commercial areas, and convention center will be 84,000 sq. m.

1. Iran:

Block Quotes:

I. The Weight of the Iranian Peacock

Senior columnist, veteran journalist, and television anchor Dan Margalit wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (2/24): 'An impoverished country's ability to allow itself to affront the world helped North Korea get American presents in exchange for dismantling (or not?) its nuclear project.... Iran is applying the same principle with all its might.... Israel faces two alternatives: to prove that the Iranian peacock is nothing but pretense empty of contents, or to prevent the U.S. from heeding U.S. Admiral Mullen's fainthearted advice.'

II. Don't Look at their Neckties

Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist

Yediot Aharonot (2/24): Q[If the Americans] -- Obama and his subordinates -- [believe that an Israeli attack on Iran would delay that country's nuclear capability by only two to three years,] and this seems to be their stance, the smiles and winks dispensed by some administration officials, who hint that Israel has the right to defend itself, re valueless. What can now be understood is that the Americans will not allow us to act.

12. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

1I. QDonQt Eulogize Obama

Gabi Sheffer, a liberal political science professor at the Hebrew University, wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (2/24): QMost Israelis, including the heads of the defense establishment and politicians led by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, categorically state that U.S. President Barack Obama will never solve the Israeli-Arab conflict. This lack of confidence in and sympathy for Obama have accompanied him, unjustifiably, since the day he began campaigning for the presidency -- and has only intensified following his election. The disrespect toward him and his administration is unwarranted; there is no doubt that it is connected to Obama's ethnic background.... [But,] as no other existing power holds such extensive strength and influence, Obama's ability to act in the world in general and the Middle East in particular has not been eliminated. Russia, China, and the European Union have not surpassed the United States in terms of their capability.... Above all, the relations between the Obama administration and the Arab states and the Palestinians are not cooling. The appointment of a new U.S. ambassador to Syria as well as the Obama administration's close ties with the Kings of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, with the Egyptian President, and with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, should arouse the attention of the Israeli authorities who wish to freeze talks on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Like administrations in the past, Obama will still play a role in numerous political and economic affairs that relate to Israel. Instead of eulogizing Obama, ignoring the conflict and investing everything in the Iranian issue, Israel must immediately resume the task of solving the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian conflict.

II. QNetanyahu's Dire Straits

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in HaQaretz (2/24): QNetanyahu is in dire straits. His box of tricks is running out. The Palestinians and settlers are exploiting his weakness. The world does not believe him and questions his control on the ground. Unless he surprises everyone with a daring initiative that will restore control to his agenda, the Prime Minister will be facing a double intifada from [Palestinian Prime Minister Salam] Fayyad and the settler hilltop youth.

III. QFrom Dubai to the West Bank and back

Dov Weisglass, who was former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's top diplomatic advisor, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (2/24): QPrevalent doubts in the world regarding the justness of Israel's overall position are manifested in the attitude to the war against terror. The supporters of the policy advocating the continuation of the Israeli occupation of Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank] should take into account that it will come at the price of damage to the war against terror.

III. QWhipping Up the Winds of War

Military correspondent Amos Harel and Palestinian affairs correspondent Avi Issacharoff wrote in HaQaretz (2/24): Q The reports of tension between Israel, Lebanon and Syria are coming at a time when there is a daily torrent of assessments, threats and forecasts concerning the progress of Iran's nuclear program. The two subjects are linked.... Several times during the past two years Israel knew how to draw red lines, such as when it suspected Syria was about to make the mistake of passing on dangerous weapons. It's

possible the issue of red lines will reemerge in the near future.

IV. QNetanyahu Did Not Learn From the Western Wall Tunnel

Diplomatic correspondent and television anchor Ben Caspit wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (2/24): QClearly, Benjamin Netanyahu is right. The Tomb of the Patriarchs and Rachel's Tomb are key heritage sites in the history of the Jewish people.... [But] our region has more than a few professional party-poopers who are just looking for a reason to start a fight and create a crisis. This is exactly what happened. After all, Netanyahu has already been in this story with the Western Wall tunnel [in 1996]. Then too, it was symbolic, pompous and unnecessary. Bloody riots broke out, and Netanyahu hurried to crawl quickly to Washington, Qdiscover a new friend in the White HouseQ named Yasser Arafat, and make a mockery of himself (and also bury 17 dead at the same opportunity).... At this rate, [a religious war] may erupt in the end. And then we will have to work hard to restore the heritage.

IV. QWhy Hit the Most Sensitive Spot?

Former Meretz leader, former Justice Minister, and chief Israeli promoter of the Geneva Initiative, Yossi Beilin, wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (2/24): QThe Government has now decided on improvements and renovations in the most sensitive spot: The holy places in the West Bank. All the diplomatic considerations collapse in the face of an empty political threat. So perhaps a responsible adult will stand up in Jerusalem and announce (which will happen in any case) that any work on the holy places will be done with the consent of the Palestinian Authority? Perhaps someone will channel national pride elsewhere, and not into inciting the next confrontation?

VI. QAn Unnecessary Explosive Mix

The ultra-Orthodox Hamodia editorialized (2/24): QThe entire debate between Jews and Arabs [over holy sites in Palestine] would have been different -- even radically so -- had there been an interfaith dialogue. The fact is that the Arab nation, which was anyway never friendly to its Jewish cousins, burst out with wars and terrorism since the beginning of the Zionist revolution.... [The Arabs] know that the Jewish faith preceded Islam and that the sites holy [to Judaism] were built during the heyday and the splendor of the Jewish nation in the era of the First and Second Temples.

VII. QBash Israel (and Your Brain)

Amnon Rubinstein, Law Professor at the Interdisciplinary Center and a former education minister from Meretz, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (2/24): QThe latest product in the flourishing bash-Israel literature is Iranophobia. The book debunks Israeli and Western anxieties about the Iranian dangers. The author, Prof. Haggai Ram of Ben-Gurion University ... holds that Israel has to demonize Iran so as to identify the Islamic Republic with its suppressed minorities in Israel: the Mizrahi [Oriental Jewish] and the haredi [ultra-Orthodox] communities. Iran, on this theory, is the hated Qrole modelQ with which these suppressed minorities can be associated.... As is common in bash-Israel literature, the author adduces no real evidence for these allegations.... But the most significant aspect of this book is the fact that it published by Stanford University Press.... [In another instance, British psychoanalyst and academic Jacqueline Rose put out the tome QThe Question of ZionQ].... Her book is full of allegations against Zionism, comparing it to mental illness. Her evidence is typical: its founders were mentally sick.... Here, too, the significant part is not the concoction of imaginary facts and accusations by the author but the fact that Princeton [University Press] published it. Indeed, when it comes to Israel-bashing, anything goes.

VIII. QMideast Drama Starring Danny Ayalon

Palestinian-American columnist and peace activist Ray Hanania wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (2/24): Q[Deputy Israeli Foreign Minister Danny] Ayalon's snub of the [Turkish] Ambassador [to Israel] represents more than just one man's failings. His actions symbolize the fundamental shortcomings common to rejectionists and shared by the Arabs, too.... In the end, although Israeli rejectionists are similar to Palestinian rejectionists,

there is one glaring difference. Palestinians never apologize for anything or admit they are wrong. Apologizing means compromise. Apologizing recognizes a mistake. Palestinian rejectionists live in a pretend world where their mistakes don't exist and their failures are not debatable. War crimes committed on their behalf are never addressed, only the war crimes of others. Danny Ayalon may be a poor diplomat but at least he knows when to apologize and recognize when he is wrong. When Israelis and Arabs can apologize and recognize when they are wrong together, and stop denying everything as they often do, maybe, just maybe, we might see the day when genuine peace is achieved.

CUNNINGHAM